

IUCAA sets up dedicated space for science toys

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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THE INTER-UNIVERSITY Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) has set up a small space called 'Vigyan Tarang', where raw material by toy maker Arvind Gupta have been stocked so people can experiment and create their own toys on science models. Gupta, a Padma Shri who says toys can be used to great advantage in a science class, gave a lecture at IUCAA called 'A journey in education' on Friday.

"It feels great to be back," said Gupta, who has been associated with the public outreach programme at IUCAA for over a decade. From 2004 till 2016, he was coordinating the science toys project, which contributed to the IUCAA's children's science centre. Educators say he made science learning more fun for students.

Samir Dhurde, in-charge of the scientific public outreach programme 'SciPop' at IUCAA, said the original team of Arvind Gupta, Vidula Mhasikar, Ashok Rupner and others, will guide students at the Vigyan Tarang. "Arvind Gupta toys, which are so popular on the internet, will now be displayed at the Vigyaan



Arvind Gupta at IUCAA on Friday. *Pavan Khengre*

Tarang. We will stock up raw material here so people can tinker with them, while worksheets on understanding science will be provided," said Dhurde.

While people of all age groups can explore and come up with their version of toys and scientific models at Vigyaan Tarang, volunteers said there would be more freedom in learning science. "We will study whether we can come up with better scientific models and engaging more children in science," said Dhurde. We will also team up with schools, he added.

While Gupta took the oppor-

tunity to mingle with members of the Mukhtangan Vigyan Shodhika — the children's science centre — at IUCAA, he said he would be based in Chennai with his family. "But if things work well, I should be in Pune next year," he said. "Efforts to popularise science have been given a fillip with the government's Atal Tinkering Labs. It is a good opportunity for children and teachers to learn innovation skills and develop ideas — a great initiative that will help children use their hands in the lab to design scientific models," said Gupta.